

DISABILITY & EMPLOYMENT

An Analysis with Multi-Stakeholder
Perspectives



TECH MAHINDRA FOUNDATION

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SUPPORTING
SCHOOL EDUCATION

ENHANCING
EMPLOYABILITY

PROMOTING
INCLUSIVITY

ABOUT TECH MAHINDRA FOUNDATION

Tech Mahindra Foundation is the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) arm of Tech Mahindra Limited. It was set up in 2007 as a Section 25 Company (now section 8, Companies Act, 2013), with the vision of Empowerment through Education.

EMPLOYABILITY

SMART (Skills for Market Training) is Tech Mahindra Foundation's flagship employability programme, with 109 centres providing skill development in 12 cities. In addition, the Foundation runs 3 Tech Mahindra SMART Academies for Healthcare, 3 Academies for Digital Technologies and 1 Academy for Logistigs as part of its employability programme. Over the years, SMART has successfully trained approximately 75000+ young men and women, with a placement rate of over 75%. Its robust processes, stringent monitoring system and industry-led approach has created a model for scaling up skill development while maintaining high training standards.

EDUCATION

Tech Mahindra Foundation is committed to teacher empowerment, enriching in learning opportunities for children, effective school governance and enhancing parental involvement in school education. In the domain of education, Shikshaantar is the Foundation's training programme for teachers. The Foundation runs two premier in-service teacher capacity building institutes called In-Service Teacher Education Institutes (ITEIs) in North Delhi Municipal Corporation and East Delhi Municipal Corporation.

The Foundation also works in approximately 40+ government schools through its ARISE (All Round Improvement in School Education) programme with the objective of holistic development of children in these schools.

DISABILITY

Disability is the third major area of intervention for Tech Mahindra Foundation. The Foundation works towards ensuring that Persons with Disabilities have the opportunity for a better future and dignified lives. This is done through two programmes: ARISE+ (All Round Improvement in School Education for Children with Disabilities) and SMART+ (Skills for Market Training for Persons with Disabilities). The Foundation mandates that 10% of all its beneficiaries are Persons with Disabilities.

FOREWORD

At Tech Mahindra Foundation, promoting and providing a platform to foster inclusivity and diversity shapes our vision and mission. Founded in 2007, one of our guiding goals has been to strengthen our understanding alongside forming a trajectory enabling skilling for persons with disabilities (PwDs). In order to pave the way for this, we have envisaged our Skills for Market Training + (SMART+) initiative. Launched in 2013, SMART+ derives its success from the work that it does with different partners across 14 centres in 8 cities across the country. A specially designed curriculum alongside well-equipped classrooms has enabled effective communication and scaled up the learning opportunities for persons with disabilities. The programme aims at skilling youth with disabilities in market-related entrepreneurial skills and provide an array of opportunities for them to get absorbed in sectors such as hospitality, IT-enabled services, retail and business process outsourcing (BPO). As a commitment to the idea of inclusivity, we also ensure that 10% of our beneficiaries are people with disabilities.



Looking back, we are proud to have established a dedicated network of stakeholders who have stepped forward to employ and hence, provide livelihood opportunities and a sense of empowerment to more than 7,000 people with disabilities trained by us. We derive immense pleasure and a sense of encouragement to see a growing number of industry professionals making inclusive hiring policy decisions. However, there still exist underlined factors stemming from traditional and cultural social ethos that inhibit PwDs a smooth transition in the formal labour market of our country. Keeping this in mind, we have conceptualised the Disability & Employment: An Analysis with Multi-Stakeholder Perspectives study.

Through this study, we wish to sensitise and provide knowledge resource to understand the ground level realities and constraints faced by PwDs in gaining and sustaining employment. We wish to become a beacon of hope to encourage inclusive hiring for PwDs by analysing the gaps in the current training courses and the infrastructure - environment provided to them in different work spaces. Our study also explored the sentiments, ideas and perceptions of PwDs themselves, both at an individual level and with respect to their communities. While data also reiterates how PwD's outperform most of their abled bodied counterparts in various sectors of our economy, there is still a long way to go to carve the way towards inclusivity in the job market.

This report can give all of us a chance to ponder and unlearn certain societal sentiments, rules and regulations and recreate policies keeping in mind the changing face of our economy.

Rakesh

Rakesh Soni
CEO, Tech Mahindra Foundation

This study has been conducted by Tech Mahindra Foundation under one of its areas of interventions, that aims at supporting PwDs for a better future and a dignified life. Tech Mahindra Foundation is the CSR arm of Tech Mahindra Limited and works with children and youth with disabilities in the areas of education and skill development. The programmes focus on enabling the independence of persons with disabilities. Skills for Market Training + (SMART+) is the employability programme for persons with disabilities which provides employable market-related entrepreneurial skills and opportunities to youth with disabilities. In this programme, the foundation supports 11 partner organisations in 8 cities across the country to train and provide employment to youth with disabilities in sectors like hospitality, business process outsourcing (BPO), IT-enabled services, and retail.

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Abstract: The UN sustainable development goals emphasize the problems related to disability and calls for full and productive employment for persons with disabilities (PWDs). It focuses on ensuring equal access to all levels of education and vocational training to vulnerable communities like persons with disabilities. This study aimed to explore how different stakeholders (as mentioned in the Methodology) understood the disability and employment of persons with disabilities. This was done through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with PWDs who are in vocational training courses, their training providers, PWDs who have and have not been employed after vocational training, and their employers. It was revealed that the youth with disabilities are interested in and are looking for employment opportunities, but face barriers both before and after employment. Workplaces are not always accessible and sensitive to the needs of PWDs. Employers are often ill-prepared to have PWD employees in their workplace and this leads to high attrition. Vocational training for PWDs needs to equip them with stronger communication skills and skills to negotiate and ask for workplace accommodations after employment, along with training in the basic sector-specific content. Training providers also need to advocate for PWD rights and emphasize on the financial sense of inclusion and diversity in the workforce to potential employers to ensure that their employment is not sympathy-based and is more objective.

INTRODUCTION

The 2011 census reported that there are 26.8 million Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in India, of which 64% are non-workers. Among these, a large portion (46%) are in the working-age group of 15-59 years. This translates to around 7.8 million people. However, disability figures are likely to be underestimations, and the WHO estimates that 15% of the global population are PWDs, of which 80% are in developing countries. Presumably, this group is financially dependent on either their families or the state and has no steady source of income. Given this situation, it is not surprising that a person with disability is often seen as a liability for the family and society and not as a contributing member.

Two studies conducted in Northern India (Dalal, 2000; Dalal et al., 2000) revealed that the attitudes towards PWDs were negative and patronizing. Approximately 50% of respondents of the surveys felt that a PWD family member could not contribute to the family income. According to Mitra and Sambamoorthi (2008), the negative attitudes towards PWDs affect their access to employment in two ways:

1. Household heads and leaders of society consider PWDs not capable of being successfully employed, which in turn augments employers' prejudice towards perceived productivity of PWDs.

2. Low self-expectations among PWDs and household members affect the PWD's decision to enter the labour market.

However, given accessible and enabling environments, this historically under-tapped talent resource can become financially independent and contributing members of the workforce. Accessible and enabling environments, specifically in the workplace can go a long way to ensure financial independence of PWDs. Such environments are known to have a positive effect on the happiness, morale and quality of the work of the PWD employee, as reported by their employers. Direct and indirect benefits to the employer have also been reported – increase in productivity, better public image of the organisation, longer retention, etc. (Hartnett et al., 2011).

Workplaces, however, are not always accommodating or enabling. There exist several kinds of barriers to accessing and maintaining employment for PWDs. These barriers can start right from accessing employment. Stone and Williams (1997) reported that there are many steps in a typical hiring process that unknowingly discriminate against PWDs. When an initial job analysis (instead of a task analysis) is done before hiring, often ideal employee profiles are created and PWDs may not fit these profiles. Employers may also be looking for potential employees in places where PWDs are under-represented (mainstream educational institutions instead of vocational schools). Additionally, the initial assessment and evaluation process may use traditional paper-pencil tests which may not be accessible to some PWDs.

After employment, the workplace itself may pose certain additional barriers. These barriers may be in the physical infrastructure of the workplace, accessibility of tools, and attitudinal barriers of supervisors and colleagues.

METHODOLOGY

This particular study¹ is an exploratory study on PWDs, their experiences at the workplace, and their experiences in accessing employment. The study includes perspectives from all the key stakeholders – PWDs who are enrolled in skill training courses in order to gain meaningful employment, providers of the said skill training courses, PWDs who have completed their training and are now employed.

PWDs who have completed their training and have not been employed or have left their job, and finally employers and colleagues of PWDs.

This study was formulated with some key questions in mind:

- 1.What are the main reasons for the high attrition rate among placed candidates?²
- 2.What are the different kinds of barriers that PWDs face: (a) while trying to get employment, (b) after getting employed within the workplace and on account of factors such as attitudes of families, incompatible infrastructure, transportation, etc. ?
- 3.How can the skill training be adapted such that candidates are prepared to face such barriers?
- 4.What, if any, is the need for sensitivity training for employers so that workplaces are better prepared to integrate PWDs?

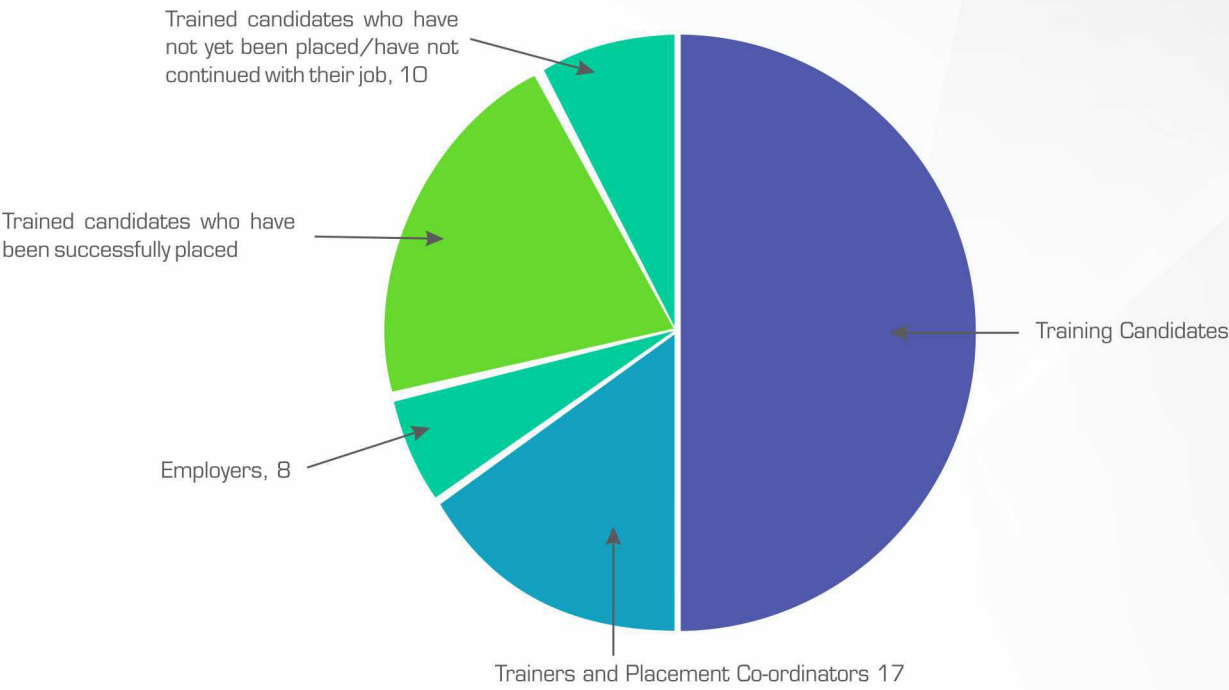
The current study was conducted across 3 cities in India – Delhi, Mumbai and Hyderabad. Within these three cities, 6 skill training centres were approached, all of which run short-term skill development courses for persons with disabilities. Along with this, they provide placement support to the trained candidates. Through focus group discussions and one-on-one interviews, a total of 103 respondents were spoken to. These 103 respondents are distributed as follows:

¹The study, supported by Tech Mahindra Foundation, was conducted between September 2017 and March 2018 in three major cities of India – Delhi, Mumbai, and Hyderabad

²From the Foundation's own work over the last year, it has been seen that around 19% of PWD candidates drop out within one month of placement. For other able-bodied candidates, the corresponding figure is of 11%.



FIGURE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS OF THE RESEARCH



Source: Tech Mahindra Foundation, internal survey (September 2017 – March 2018)

TABLE 1: PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS OF THE STUDY

PROFILE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS
Training Candidates	50
Trainers and Placement Coordinators	17
Employers	8
Trained candidates who have been successfully placed	18
Trained candidates who have not yet been placed/who have not continued in their initial place of employment	10
Total	103

Focus group discussions were conducted with training candidates, trainers and placement co-ordinators, supplemented with follow up interviews. One-on-one interviews were conducted with employers, trained candidates who have been successfully placed, and trained candidates who have not yet been placed/who have not continued in their initial place of employment.

All the interviews and focus group discussions were recorded and then transcribed for deeper analysis. The transcribed interviews and focus group discussions were codified and then emerging themes were identified.

FIELD INVESTIGATION DATA: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

EXPERIENCE OF EMPLOYERS

Through conversations with employers, some interesting themes emerged. Employers acknowledged that there was a lack of societal sensitivity towards PWDs. While they themselves did not report any insensitivity in their own organisations, per se, it was acknowledged that this societal insensitivity also influences the organisation and its employees. The need to appear socially desirable or politically correct through their responses was apparent. For example, an employer said:

"So, I would say that we're an equal opportunity employer. But, you know as a society, there is a natural bias against these people ... we think why to make your own life uncomfortable because you'll probably have to work extra hard and all that. So, nothing from our organisation but as a society we are biased."

This finding is similar to that from Kulkarni and Lengnick-Hall's (2012) review of existing research. They report that while in several experimental studies, a negative attitude towards hiring persons with disabilities was not reported (Bell & Klein, 2001, Christman&Slaten, 1991, as cited by Kulkarni and Lengnick-Hall, 2012), in field studies the same finding was not reported. In field studies, a negative bias towards hiring PWDs was seen, along with concerns over productivity levels (Lengnick-Hall et al, 2008, as cited by Kulkarni and Lengnick-Hall 2012).

Similarly, from the employers interviewed for this study, a common concern expressed was about productivity levels in comparison with able-bodied peers. Even when the task at hand was not influenced by the disability, this concern remained strong. For example, in a data entry job role where information from hard copies of forms have to be typed into computer software, employers had doubts and concerns about the ability of a hearing-impaired employee to do the same.

For most employers interviewed, hiring of PWDs is part of a social cause or comes from a perspective of sympathy and pity. This may lead to the employers – consciously or subconsciously- discriminating between able-bodied employees and employees with disability. Such discrimination would be based on the assumption that able-bodied employees are the productive and contributing members in the organisation, while the PWD employees would be in the organisation because of the benevolence of the employers and not because of their skills.

The employers interviewed were from one of two categories: the HR representatives of the organisation, and the immediate supervisors of PWD employees. What emerged was, while HR representatives appeared to be sensitized and aware of PWDs, the immediate supervisors were often not so. There were hostility, mistrust and serious concerns regarding the capabilities of PWD employees among this second lot of people.

Another theme that emerged: employers acknowledged that they do not always have the skills to train PWDs. For example, their training resource material was not in accessible formats, or that they did not know sign language and thus were not able to conduct training with their own employees.

Employers were also hesitant to provide workplace accommodation to their PWD employees, fearing it would appear as an unfair preference towards them as compared to the other employees. Gold et al (2012) found that PWD employees too had similar concerns while asking for workplace accommodations fearing that their co-workers would perceive these requests to be illegitimate and unearned.

EXPERIENCE OF EMPLOYERS: SUMMARY

1. Lack of societal sensitivity which influences organisations in their functioning
2. Concerns of employers regarding productivity levels of PWD employees
3. Hiring of PWDs stems from a social cause
4. Lack of sensitivity and awareness about disability through the organisational hierarchy
5. Lack of skills of employers to retrain PWD employees
6. Hesitant to provide workplace accommodations in fear of appearing partial

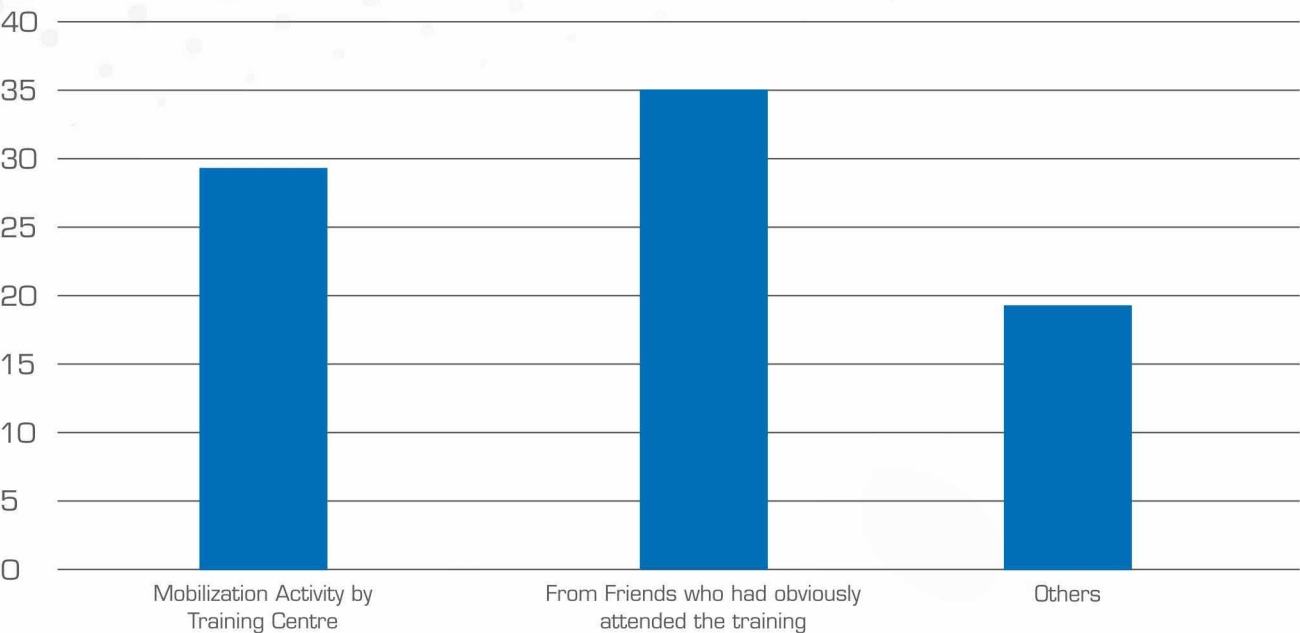
BACKGROUND BEFORE ENTERING TRAINING COURSES

The first key finding from the interactions with PWDs is that several candidates have been going for such short-term training courses for a long time. 50% of the candidates had attended one or more such training course earlier. Candidates shift from one training to the other, often learning the same course with the hope of getting placed at the end of the course. Thus, because of their earlier negative experience of not being placed after their previous training, their expectations of job placement from the current training are also low. Trainers too report this finding. According to them, these trainees join in with the expectation of getting placement support directly, without having to attend the regular classes. This is amplified by a common attitude of the candidates' parents (as expressed by the candidates themselves) – *"It is better that you're going for the training, rather than sitting idle at home"*. The idea often is that these training programs are a way of keeping oneself busy, rather than being effective in providing a means of livelihood.

One key issue that was expressed by all trainers was that parents of PWDs severely lack confidence in their children's ability to live independently. They are highly protective and this influences the trainee's self-confidence level. This issue was especially pronounced for female trainees. While for male children, parents are more willing to accept that eventually, they need to be independent and hence are willing to allow them more space, the same was not the case with female candidates. Female candidates had to negotiate and convince their parents more, and also faced more restrictions in terms of the type of jobs, timings, and location. For example, parents are less willing for their daughters to take up jobs in hotels. The training candidates, too, spoke about the need for confidence in order to work effectively. While some said that they wanted more confidence to work more effectively, others said that they've joined this course hoping that it will give them more confidence by the end of it.

Most respondents had found out about the training through their friends who had previously attended the program.

FIGURE 2: WHERE DID TRAINING CANDIDATES LEARN ABOUT THE TRAINING?



Source: Tech Mahindra Foundation, internal survey (September 2017 – March 2018)

While a majority of respondents said that they received support from their family and friends, there was a significant number who said they had to work hard to convince their families and/or faced ridicule from their friends. Parents were concerned about what would be the outcome of this training and would it convert into an actual job for their child. In some cases, the candidates reported that their friends treated their training as a joke and did not fully support them initially. However, after they saw the changes within the candidate, they changed their stance. Once again, female respondents were more likely to report a lack of support from their families. In order to tackle this, they would often call their parents to visit the centre and speak to the trainers and observe the classes. The family's influence was also apparent in the placement process. Parent's preferences regarding the nature, location, and job timings were clearly reflected in the candidate's choice of employment.

It was also found that several candidates had tried approaching various organisations on their own but failed to get a job. This is because they either did not know the proper channels to approach organisations, or that after approaching they were asked to show a training certificate. Thus, the training certificate gave them a sense of legitimacy.

As for the training course that they were in, candidates had a variety of questions, concerns, and feedback. The first two questions that almost all candidates asked were if the training would prepare them enough for a job, and if the training would prepare them enough for the interview.

BACKGROUND BEFORE ENTERING TRAINING COURSE: SUMMARY

- 1. Several trainees had attended similar training courses before.
- 2. Lack of confidence of parents of PWDs in the ability of their children to live independently.
- 3. Needing to convince family about the value of the training course. More difficult for female.
- 4. Difficult for PWDs to approach organisations on their own.
- 5. Chief concern before joining the course – Will this prepare me for the job and the interview?

TRAINING

A total of 15 trainers, centre managers and placement co-ordinators were interviewed. 8 of these respondents were PWDs themselves. The others had become trainers because either they had family members who were PWDs or that they had developed a liking and interest for sign language. The trainers, many of whom had themselves been trainees, acknowledged that they play an important role in the lives of their trainees. They said that along with providing training and placements for their trainees, they were also responsible for their overall personality development and empowerment. The key task of any trainer is to make an assessment of the trainees' skills, interests, salary expectations, and capabilities and match that with a suitable job role.

One concern that all trainers had, especially those who were training candidates with Hearing Impairment (HI), was that the training period was not enough to focus on English language skills (the average length of the training period was 3.1 months). For HI trainees, written language skills are especially important because that is one of their chief means of communication with the rest of society. For example, a trainer in Hyderabad said:

"The students who are coming speak Hindi or Telugu. They do not know English and need to start from the basics like alphabets. So, it is very difficult and two months is not sufficient. One year or one and a half years is required to develop their English. Because only when they know the basics of English, it is easy to learn. Two months go by too fast."

Trainees too reported that they would have liked the training to further improve their writing skills because that is their only medium of communication with hearing-impaired individuals.

Almost all candidates saw the value of having modules on soft skills and general life skills. They said that these helped them understand and develop their workplace behaviour and etiquette. Most candidates expected that through this training they would improve their computer skills and English. Those respondents who had finished the training course did appreciate the programs that they had attended, reporting that their levels of English, sign language (for HI respondents), communication skills, dressing and etiquette, confidence, and typing skills had improved.

The 2011 census data indicates that a majority (69%) of PWDs reside in rural areas. Additionally, accessibility, availability and utilization of rehabilitation services are issues in rural India (Kumar et al, 2012). Thus, it was not surprising that several PWDs who were from rural areas had migrated to the urban cities (where the current research was conducted) for their training. However, during training, dropouts after admission is a common occurrence. One key reason is that several of these outstation students who come for the training find it very difficult to manage financially.

TRAINING: SUMMARY

- 1. Many trainers were PWDs themselves.
- 2. Key task of trainers – assessing skills, interests, expectations, and capabilities and matching with a suitable job role.
- 3. Focus on written English training for HI candidates.
- 4. Both trainers and trainees see value in soft skills training.
- 5. Many trainees come from rural areas who are unable to manage financially and later drop out.

CONCERNS FROM WORKPLACE – NATURE OF JOB

In terms of expectations from their upcoming placement opportunities, an often-reported phrase was that they would like “a decent job”, which on further probing was defined by most candidates as a job which involved fixed timings and working in front of a computer in an office.

“Most of the candidates who come here say that they want a job where there is a table, a computer and they'll have to work on that. They will work for 8 hours from 9 to 5. They want a reputed job in an office where they have a cabin or a cubicle and they can work there. This is their expectation.”

While some candidates had fixed ideas about exactly which organisation they wanted to work in and in what role, there were others who claimed to be okay with any kind of job that they could get. Trainers reported that many trainees often have fixed expectations about the type of role and the organisations that they'd want to work in. This is often influenced by their friends' or peers' placement in a particular role in an organisation.

Some of the frequently noted career aspirations for PWDs were to start a business of their own, become teachers for other disabled students and many also aspired government jobs.

Candidates also expressed concern over the final location of their placement. They said that their families wouldn't approve if it was away from their hometowns/villages or far away from their home. This fear was especially pronounced in the case of female candidates.

Parents also had different worries which were linked to specific disabilities. For example, in the case of intellectual disabilities and visual impairments, one key concern of parents was about traveling to work. In the case of hearing impairments, the concern was about communication.

In terms of expectations from their own future, candidates expressed many concerns. The first was that they wanted to be earning enough such that they could have some savings every month. Candidates also expressed that eventually they wanted to be financially responsible for their families and look after them. They also had aspirations of having their own families and the need to prepare to take care of them. Additionally, a key concern that PWD employees have is that their jobs should help enhance their skills such that there is adequate career growth. Many students also wanted to pursue higher studies eventually, learn new skills and technology, and even start a business of their own.

CONCERNS FROM WORKPLACE - NATURE OF JOB: SUMMARY

- 1. Looking for a desk job with fixed timings, in an office.
- 2. Many wanted to start their own businesses.
- 3. Many were looking for government jobs.
- 4. Concerned over the location of their job, and not willing to travel too far.
- 5. The job should provide financial security as well as opportunities for growth and learning.

CONCERNS FROM WORKPLACE – ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVITY ISSUES

PWD candidates had strong concerns about discrimination and being ridiculed by other colleagues at the workplace. This could be for using sign language for communication, or accessible technology like screen readers. A related fear was that because of their different abilities, other colleagues and supervisors would automatically underestimate their intelligence and assign non-crucial or non-challenging tasks to them.

They also feared that because of this they would be looked over for promotions and feared about their growth in the organisation. For example, here is a response from a training candidate with hearing impairment:

“The same thing we've always faced in our lives ... because we are deaf and the others can hear, the way people look at us, the way people joke about us because we speak in signs (it is still better now but was worse when we were kids) ... so this is a problem that we might have to face...hopefully we won't. When we use sign language to express ourselves, people get irritated and they say that get someone from your family and we'll talk to them. These are the issues of communication that we face. And then they give us sub-standard work even though we might be intelligent.”

Thus, among deaf candidates, communication with their colleagues was a key concern. For this purpose, many of them also wanted their training course to teach them more English to improve their written language for communication. In an earlier study involving interviews with deaf professionals who have achieved moderate success at work, Foster and MacLeod (2003) found that interviewees placed a high emphasis on reading and writing because they give an alternative strategy for learning information. It also provides a sense of independence in the workplace by not having to constantly depend on sign language interpreters for communication. Hearing-impaired candidates also reported that their work became easier if they were working along with others who also had hearing impairments as in such cases communication was no longer a barrier. For more effective communication at their workplace, several hearing-impaired candidates had requested their supervisors to learn the basics of sign language. Many supervisors have also taken the initiative themselves and have tried to learn it.

A frequent complaint of the respondents as employees was that their non-disabled colleagues were not interacting with them and that they felt isolated in the workplace. The trainers also report that the PWD employees too often *misinterpret their colleagues' gestures and actions and are very sensitive about being made fun of.*

On the other hand, employees who are happy with their placements reported that there is frequent communication with their supervisors which gives them a chance to address their grievances. This was a key point, as it was reported that employees who quit after joining, often do so because there is no direct channel of communication for grievance redressal. If any issue arises between the employees and the organisations, not enough effort is made to resolve the issue, since communication is often a barrier.

Trainees are also typically very particular about the distance of their workplace from their homes. On an average, they are not willing to travel more than half an hour away from their residence. As for their jobs, the respondents valued fixed timings.

CONCERNS FROM WORKPLACE – ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVITY ISSUES: SUMMARY

- 1. Being ridiculed and discriminated in the workplace.
- 2. Underestimations of intellect and capabilities because of their disability.
- 3. Communication with hearing colleagues for HI candidates.
- 4. Being isolated and lack of socialization in the workplace.
- 5. Frequent and open communication with supervisors made grievance redressal easier.
- 6. Fixed timings are valued by PWDs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Issues that arise at the workplace often stem from the fact that employers and immediate supervisors of PWDs might not see the financial sense in having a PWD employee. According to the current research, a lot of the hiring that happens can be attributed to the sympathy factor. Additionally, prior research (Lengnick-Hall et al, 2008) indicates that many employer's concerns regarding hiring PWDs are based on stereotypical ideas of disability. Thus, it is necessary for training partners to emphasize the business sense of inclusion. For example, hiring PWDs provides brands with a great public image to customers (Siperstein et al, 2005). PWDs fare equally or better than people without disabilities on the criterion of dependability, they show lower absenteeism and turnover. Finally, being open to hiring persons with disabilities also mean that the employer has access to a new talent pool. Thus, it is critical that skill training programs emphasize this and advocate keeping these criteria in mind.

2. The current research indicates that PWDs are future-oriented in terms of their careers. This may also be because they are more aware of the barriers and obstacles to their career development and hence understand the value of planning. Hence, NGOs working with PWDs as well as training organisations for PWDs would do well to assist them in career planning. Additionally, they should also create and promote success stories of employment and career growth of other PWD to serve as role models.

3. Organisations that provide training to PWDs are often the link between the general population of PWDs and the employer. In such a position, these training organisations have to support employers to build inclusive and accessible workplaces. This can be done by

(a) Sharing best practices from different employers and industries,

(b) Conducting accessibility and inclusivity assessments of workplaces and providing employers feedback on the same. For example, the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities in collaboration with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) has developed a tool called the Accessibility-Inclusivity Index which helps in assessing the current stage of inclusiveness and accessibility of persons with disabilities by an organisation. It can also act as a guide for taking progressive steps to increase support, inclusiveness and accessibility towards /employees with disabilities.

Helping create networks of PWD employees within an organisation or within a particular industry. This is because this enables them to negotiate better for accommodation requests, share common grievances and find workplace solutions.

(d) It is also important that these training organisations help build capacities of the employers such that the PWD employees can sustain within the organisation without their support. This can be done through hand-holding in the initial stages of employment with gradual withdrawal of support.

4. Specifically for persons with hearing impairment, communication in the workplace becomes a huge barrier. Thus, training has to emphasize on building skills of written communication in English such that PWDs are able to communicate independently with their colleagues at their workplace.

5. Finally, to adopt a rights-based approach, it is necessary that PWDs are able to advocate for themselves, both in general and in the workplace. Thus, it is necessary that through the training, we build confidence and an agency among PWD training candidates to advocate for themselves.

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RISE, RECOGNISE AND RESPECT DISABILITY

